

The *Los Angeles Times* is the latest newspaper to [editorialize in favor](#) of the [Free Flow of Information Act](#), otherwise known as a federal media shield law:

*Readers prefer that the sources of important news stories be named, and reporters and editors agree. But confidential sources have made it possible for the press to expose abuses of power from the Los Angeles Police Department's spying on political leaders to the Bush administration's wiretapping, without a court order, of U.S. citizens suspected of being in contact with foreign terrorists.*

*The Free Flow of Information Act approved by the House would not provide blanket protection for reporters who rely on confidential sources. The bill would allow a judge to order the disclosure of a source's identity in narrow circumstances, such as when it was necessary to prevent an act of terrorism, avert loss of life or identify someone who disclosed trade secrets or confidential medical information. But a judge would be faced with those decisions only if he determined that the information sought by investigators or prosecutors couldn't be obtained elsewhere. Perhaps most important, the House bill instructs judges to protect confidential sources unless "the public interest in compelling disclosure...outweighs the public interest in gathering or disseminating news or information."*